

“Concept” in Modern Linguistics: the Component of the Concept “Good”

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The development of humanitarian knowledge put forward a dilemma to work out a new term which would adequately indicate the content of the linguistic sign, which would remove the functional limitations of traditional sense and meaning, and which would organically merge logical-psychological and linguistic categories.

Any science possesses the concepts that on the one hand, do not have a clear, precise and universally accepted definition; on the other hand the term is “approximately” clear to all professionals in this field of research. Otherwise stated, this is due to the fact that each researcher provides his/her understanding of the ultimate elements on the basis of which the theory is developed, however, a number of terms introduced by individual experts, for some time becomes very popular, and the frequency of use creates a certain “visibility” of clarity and transparency of their meaning.

The increasing demand of the unit gave the emergence to a number of competing nominative units. However, this unit has neither one generalized definition, nor a single term, at least in some countries. In the Russian science, for instance, the term “concept” is not monosemantic and the competition of the terms, such as “concept” (Likhachev, Stepanov, Lyapin, Neroznak, etc.) “linguoculturema” (Vorobiev), “mythologema” (Lyahteenmyaki, Bazylev), “logoepisteme” (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, Burvikova) continues since the early 90’s. However, during the recent years it becomes apparent that the term “concept” according to its frequency of use is much ahead of all other coinages. The notion of “concept” has been borrowed by linguists from mathematical logic.

The meaning of “concept” is explored in cognitive science, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind. The term “concept” is traced back to Aristotle’s “The classical theory of concepts” definition of terms (Aristotle 1998).

The next scholar worth mentioning is a language philosopher Gottlob Frege. In 1892 he defined distinction between the concept and object in the language philosophy. According to Frege, any sentence that expresses a singular thought consists of an expression that signifies an *Object* (it can be a proper name or a general term with the definite article) together with a predicate that signifies a *Concept* (Slater 2000, 42-55). This term is employed actively by the cognitive linguistics in its categorical apparatus as a missing cognitive “link” in the content of which the associative-figurative evaluations and understandings are included in addition to that notion.

Thus “concept” in linguistics is both an old and a new term. The word *conceptus* is a Latin medieval formation, derived from the verb “concipere – concapere” which means “conceive”. In classical Latin the word *conceptus* had the meaning “pond”, “inflammation”, “impregnation” and “germ”. The word “concept” together with its

derivatives entered all the Romanic and Germanic languages (French *concept - concevoir*, Italian *concetto - concepire*, Spanish *concepto - concebir*, Portuguese *conceito - conceber*, English *concept - conceive*).

Like most new scientific notions, “concept” was introduced with a certain degree of pathos and sometimes through a cognitive metaphor: it was called “a multi-dimensional cluster of sense”, “a semantic slice of life” (Clark 1981), “a gene of culture” (Talmy 2000), “a certain potency of meaning” (Ляпин 1997), “a unit of memory”, “a quantum of knowledge”, “a germ of mental operations” and even “a misty something” (Аскольдов 1997). Today, the term “concept” is widely used in various fields of linguistics. It has entered into the notional system of cognitive, semantic, and cultural linguistics. (Croft, Cruse 2004).

The study of the concept in modern linguistics is of the paramount importance. However, any attempt to comprehend the nature of the concept is associated with a number of the most diverse points of view. The intensive research of it in the field of cognitive linguistics has demonstrated a great disparity in the understanding of the term “concept”. Discrepancies cause ambiguity and terminological confusion (Gruzberg 184).

Thus the term “concept” is an umbrella term for several scientific directions: first of all for cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics, dealing with thinking and cognition, storing and transforming information, as well as for cultural linguistics, which is still defining and refining the boundaries of the theory formed by the postulates and basic categories. We can assume that as in mathematics, the concept in cognitive science is the basic axiomatic category which is undetectable, intuitively understanding; the hyperonym of the notion, ideas, frame, script, gestalt etc. (Лихачев 1997).

According to the Russian scientist J. Stepanov, “concepts are just phrases, fragments of conversation <...>, but they are subtle phrases that force our minds create such content, as if it has been familiar for us for a long time”. Concept can be understood as bunch of culture in the consciousness of people; it is something in the form of which the culture enters the mental world. And, moreover, people through the concept enter the culture and affect it. Concepts are not only contemplated, they are experienced. They are the subject of emotions, likes and dislikes, and sometimes collisions. The concept is also a discrete unit of the collective consciousness, which is stored in the national memory of native speakers in verbally determinate form. As a cognitive unit of meaning, a concept is an abstract idea or a mental symbol sometimes defined as a “unit of knowledge”, built from other units which act as a concept’s characteristic. A concept is typically associated with a corresponding representation in a language such as a single meaning of a term (Dillon 2000 51-71).

In linguistics, the concept, in contrast to a word, has a more complicated structure. The content of the concept is divided into linguistic meaning and cultural sense. That is why it is often called a unit of knowledge, an abstract idea or a mental symbol (Britannica 2008).

Concepts as elements of consciousness are quite independent in the language. According to V. Evans, concepts are intermediaries between the words and extralinguistic reality (Evans 2009). Only those phenomena of the reality can become a concept, that are relevant to and valuable for a particular culture, which has a large number of linguistic units to commit themselves in that culture, which are the subject for proverbs and sayings, poetry and prose. They are a kind of symbols or emblems, specifically pointing to the text, situation or knowledge that created them. (Нерознак 1998).

At present stage of linguistics, several approaches to the concept understanding can be identified. Researchers of different countries treat the concept as a linguistic-cognitive / psycholinguistic / linguistic-cultural / cultural / or linguistic phenomenon. Each approach, on the grounds of certain features, highlights the specific margin of the concept. There are two approaches that are based on the role of language shaping the concept and showing the bonds between language and culture.

The first approach considers the concept as a cultural phenomenon. "Concepts are self-organizing, integrative, functional systematic, multidimensional, idealized formations based on the notional (*pseudo-* or *pre-*notional) basis and which are fixed to the meaning of a sign: the scientific term, or word (phrase) of everyday language, or more complex lexico -grammatical and semantic structures, or non-verbal subjective image, or action" (Ляпин 1997).

A. Wierzbicka states that the "concept" is an object from the "ideal" world which has the name and reflects the people's cultural understanding of real world (Wierzbicka 1980). Concept describes typical situations of culture and is the subject of cultural science studies.

According to J. Stepanov the "concept" is "a basic cultural cell in the mental world of a man" (Stepanov 2007, 248). Concept is a mental structure that represents the knowledge of an individual about a particular segment of the world. Being a part of the world picture, the concept reflects the orientation of values of both the individual person and the entire linguistic community. It implies that the concept may include the generally valid features as well as the individual characteristics of native speakers. Analyzing the concept from the cultural point of view, it should be borne in mind that the content of the concept will remain within the frame of particular culture and epoch.

Representatives of the second approach propose to consider the concept as linguistic-cognitive phenomenon. The concept is the information about what an individual knows, suggests, thinks, imagines about the objects of our world.

The notion of "concept" corresponds to those senses, which a man operates in the process of thinking and the senses which reflect the content of experience and knowledge, the content of results of all human activities and the learning processes of the world in the form of some "quanta" of knowledge. A concept is a kind of algebraic expression of meaning, which a man operates in his written speech (Лихачев, 1997).

V. Nezorniak states that the “concept is a remarkable image abstracted in a word and reflecting a fragment of the national picture of the world (Незориак 1997).

According to the linguistic-cognitive understanding the relation of the concept is related with verbal means of expression. Language does not form concepts, but serves as a means of the exchange of them and for the discussion in the process of communication. Concepts exist in the real mentality of an individual, thus, to communicate they have to be verbalized, that is, to be expressed by language means. In the language the concept can be verbalized both by individual words and phrases and by sentences and the entire texts, which determines the concept itself. The choice of the verbal form depends on the personal meaning, mental representation and the internal lexicon of the speaker, which are interconnected.

The understanding of the concept as an operating unit of thought is a way and the result of quantification and categorization of knowledge. This is because the object of the concept is the mental entity, whose formation is determined by the form of abstraction, and the model of which is specified by the concept, which not only describes the object but also creates it.

Thus it is obvious that the study of concepts in all its aspects is one of the important research directions in linguistics in recent years. Of special interest is the analysis of the structure of the concept.

According to Stepanov concept has a “layered” structure, its strata are the result of the cultural life of different epoch. The special structure of the concept includes the main feature, an additional (passive, historical) features plus the inner form. The inner form, the etymological criterion is regarded as a foundation on which all the other layers of meaning are built (Степанов 2007).

There are other points of view on the structure of the concept. G. Slyshkin and V. Karasik propose to consider the cultural concept as a multidimensional meaningful construct, where the notional, figurative and value sides are distinguished. The notional aspect of a concept is the linguistic fixation of a concept, its name, description, feature structure, definition, comparative characteristics of this concept in relation to other groups of concepts. The imagery side of a concept is its visual, auditory, tactile, taste characteristics of objects, events, events which in one form or another are reflected in our consciousness. The value side of a concept specifies the importance of educational process, both for an individual and for a team.

The scholars consider the concept as a multidimensional mental unit where the evaluative element predominates. The concept groups around some “strong” point of consciousness, from which associative vectors diverge. Most relevant associations to native speakers constitute the core of the concept, the less significant - the periphery. According to them, the concept has not any clear boundaries, while receding from the nucleus the associations are gradual fading. A nucleus language or speech unit is called

the concept. Concept manifests itself in the mind with the help of language units. The entrances to the concept may belong to different levels of language. To appeal to one and the same concept lexemes, idioms, collocations, and sentences, and texts can be used.

The scholars identify four zones in the structure of the concept - the main (intra-zone, extra-zone) and the additional zones, that is, quasi-zone quasi- extra-zone. Intra-zone , it is the features of a concept reflecting their own denotatum; the extra-zone includes features derived from the direct and indirect meanings. Quasi-intra-zone and quasi-extra-zone are connected by the formal associations, resulting from the harmony of the concept name with other words, using euphemisms and so on (Карасик, Слышкин 2001).

V. Evans believes that the concepts internally are organized by the field feature and include a sensual image, informational content and interpretative field. Sensual image in the structure of a concept is formed by perceptual cognitive features. These features arise in the native speakers' minds reflecting the environment through the organs of senses. Figurative features form a metaphorical interpretation of objects and phenomena. The structure of the concept is formed by cognitive classifiers and are merged with cognitive features which vary in the degree of brightness in the minds (V. Evans 2009).

The informational content of the concept consists of a minimum amount of cognitive features that determine the most important and distinguishing features of an object or phenomenon. The interpretative field includes cognitive features, which interpret the informational content of the concept. A distinctive feature of the interpretive field is the presence of cognitive symptoms conflicting with one another. The structure of a concept can be described only when its content is defined and described, that is, the cognitive features of the concept are revealed.

In a broader sense, the structure of the concept can be represented as a circle. The basic notion – the kernel of the concept – is in the centre of the structure, and at the periphery stays everything that is added by culture, traditions and people's personal experiences.

Linguo-cultural concept as a subject of study of linguo-culture appears (lingvokulturologija) to the researchers as a cultural, mental and linguistic education.

According to the Y. Stepanov's definition, linguo-cultural concept is a mental unit, aimed at a comprehensive study of language, consciousness and culture. The linguo-cultural concept differs from other units in its mental nature. Mentality is perceived as a guided collection of images and perceptions. H. Bloom defines mentality as the perception of the world in the categories and forms of the native language that connects the intellectual, and spiritual qualities of national character in its typical manifestations (Bloom 2000). Many scholars agree that the mentality is easier to describe than to

define. Mentality of deeper thinking, standards of behaviour represents the internal willingness of a person to act in a certain way. Linguo-cultural concept differs from other mental units by the presence of the value component. Value is always in the centre of the concept.

A linguo-concept consists of distinguish evaluative, figurative and conceptual components. Notional component of the concept is stored in the verbal form. A figurative component is non-verbal and can be described or interpreted at most.

Concept includes such semiotics categories as the image, the notion and meaning in the reduced form, as a kind of „hyperonym” (generic term) and is characterized as heterogeneous and multi-featured. The concept acquired the discursive meaning representation from the notion, from the image it appropriated metaphor and emotiveness, and from the meaning it acquired the inclusion of the name (concept).

Concepts as interpreters of meaning constantly are refined and modified. Being a part of the system, they are influenced by the other concepts and are modified. The very possibility of interpretation suggests that many of the concepts are subject to change, as the world around us is constantly changing giving us the opportunity to learn something new.

Concept has a certain structure that is not rigid; it is a necessary condition for the existence of the concept and its entry into the conceptual realm. Concept includes all the mental characteristics of a phenomenon and provides an understanding of reality. Ordered collection of concepts in the mind of a person forms his/her conceptual realm. Language is one of the means to access to the people’s mind, their conceptual realm, the content and structure of concepts as units of thinking.

Further on these theoretical underpinnings will be illustrated by the analysis of the concept “good” with the reference to “The Chronicles of Narnia”.

The concept Good is one of the basic concepts of any culture and has a great axiological (=philosophical study) value. Every language has a word “good“, which has a meaning “possessing the right quality and moral excellence” (Britannica 2008).

“Good” is a broad concept but it typically is associated with life, continuity, happiness, prosperity and truth. The dichotomy of good and evil are inseparable. It is difficult to describe the concept of good without the opposition of bad or evil. Thus resting on this dichotomy and depending on the context, good (and evil) may represent judgments, norms, claims of absolute value related to human nature or to various standards.

According to a writer, editor and a film maker Jobie Weetaluktuk, the Genesis gives a description of the concept “good”. Adam and Eve knew God and because of that knowledge, they knew what is good. In a monotheistic (one God, religious) contexts,

the concept of God is derived as an infinite projection of love and goodness in people's lives. What is good and what is evil is determined for all humanity by God. The concept of good apart from God is an illusion. God is the absolute concept of "good". People cannot categorize God's deeds into "good" and "bad", but unambiguously, what God does is good. Thus God is the initial and absolute concept of good. The good is light, love, life, heaven and positiveness (Weetaluktuk 2010). Goodness is not something over and above what can be found in each good thing; it never exists apart from good things, it is merely a quality that can be found in each.

As a philosophical concept "good" might represent a hope that natural love can be continuous, expansive, and all-inclusive. Theories of moral goodness are interested in various sorts of things that are good, and in the abstract meaning of the word "good". In other contexts, the "good" is whatever produces the best consequences upon the people lives, and their states of well being (Britannica 2008).

The concept "good" occupies a very important place in the works of High Fantasy, including the C.S. Lewis's novel "The Chronicles of Narnia".

As it has been mentioned above, the concept has three main components: conceptual, significant and figurative. Next the figurative component of the concept "good" based on the novel "The Chronicles of Narnia" will be discussed.

The informative content of the concept "good" is very close to the encyclopaedic dictionary definition of a keyword of the concept (Britannica 2008). *Good* – kind; pleasant; enjoyable; morally right (Britannica 2008).

The content of the concept, according to Croft and Cruse, in other words is called the interpretive field. It includes the cognitive features, which in one or another way interpret the basic informative content of the concept. The cognitive features are derived from the concept representing some inferential knowledge or estimate it (Croft, Cruse 2004). Thus, *white, merry, laugh, light, bright, clear, green*, will be included in the interpretative field of the concept "good".

The analysis of the novel allowed singling out a large number of stylistic tools used in the novel for the explication of figurative component of the concept "good". The most striking stylistic means used in the novel more often than others, namely the epithet, simile, metaphor, intensification and personification will serve as means of the analysis of the figurative component of the concept "good".

A very important stylistic device used in the novel is the epithet. Many researchers consider the epithet as the primary means of the approval of individualism, and as the subjective estimating relation to the described phenomenon (Simpson 2004).

For the representation of the concept "good" in the analysis of the novel the following attributive phrases were highlighted: *great eye; the fiery brightness of the Lion; soft green light; smooth water; tired-looking light; warm, green sunshine of the wood; golden mane and the great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes; sweet spring air; peaceful place; the pale brightness of the mist; sunny quietness of the Wood; and others.*

Another figurative means are comparison and simile. According to Simpson, comparison is a collation of two objects or phenomena having a mutual feature aiming at explaining one of them by means of another (ibid).

The analysis of the novel revealed the following examples of comparisons and similes representing the concept “good”: *simply and sweetly as a bird flies to its nest; hair like burning silver; spears like white-hot metal; large yellowish-golden apples as firm and juicy as you could wish to see; it was a rich place: as rich as plum cake; it spread out from the Lion like a pool. It ran up the sides of the little hills like a wave; the Cabby’s wife fetched out of our world...quickly, silver apples peeped out like stars from under every leaf; the smell of the Apple of Youth was as if there was a window in the room that opened on Heaven etc.*

Metaphor is a means of a figurative representation of reality and often is under study as one of the ways of accurate reflection of reality in artistic plane, it also involves judgement and comparison. Creating a specific image of an abstract concept, metaphor allows different interpretations in the content of the message (ibid).

The metaphor is a reflection and representation of some meanings on others. So, the top positively evaluated in mentality - the highest expression of thoughts, high taste, high action, the higher strata of society.

Metaphor is a figure of speech that explains a concept with a different concept, or which takes a concept out of its regular or common use and places it into another use to which it is only somewhat related to provide a new view to the concept. The purpose of metaphor is not just in naming an object or phenomenon but in its expressive characteristics (ibid).

The analysis of linguistic realization of the concept “good” in the novel revealed such metaphors as: *drinking in the sound; face seemed to be a sea of tossing gold; under every leaf there peeped out the gold or faint yellow or purple or glowing red of fruits; and others.*

Very often a method of intensification (or gradation: a fish, a monster, a nightmare) is used within a sentence or a paragraph aiming at the emotional and artistic impact on the reader. The main point of the intensification lies in the fact that each subsequent sentence exceeds the previous one exceeds either in the significance of the content or in the emotional intensity (ibid).

The analysis of linguistic realization of the concept in the novel distinguished the following cases of intensification: *The silence of the wood had been rich and warm and full of life; it seemed richer and warmer and more peaceful; and power rolled about them and over them and entered into them; they had never really been happy or wise or good, or even alive and awake, before; the sun got low and the light got redder and the shadows got longer; bigger and more beautiful and more brightly golden and more terrible; strong and proud and happy; etc.*

Another important stylistic device used in the novel is the personification or embodiment which means transferring of various attributes and properties of human to inanimate objects and abstract concepts (ibid).

Analyzing the linguistic realization of the concept “good” in the novel the following cases of personalization were found: *sun laughed for joy; flowers began to think about closing; sun...had looked older than ours; sun... looked younger, etc.*

The accomplished analysis revealed the following features: firstly, along with the stylistic tools such as personification, metaphors, and intensification used by the author, one of the most impressive examples of the language of the novel in the description of goodness are the comparisons and epithets. Secondly, the most frequent stylistic means in the novel “The Chronicles of Narnia” are epithets and comparisons. Less frequently used are metaphors and intensifications, and the least used are personifications. Thirdly, during the analysis of the figurative component of the concept “good” the fact was revealed that the author often uses several different stylistic means in the same sentence. The most frequently met a pair of stylistic means is the epithet with the intensifications: *“Then their heads came out of the pool and, once more, the sunny quietness of the Wood between the Worlds was all about them, and it seemed richer and warmer and more peaceful then ever after the staleness and ruin of the place”*(Lewis 2008, 44). And the metaphor with the epithet: *“The Cabby and the two children had open mouths and shining eyes; they were drinking in the sound, and they looked as if it reminded them of something”*(Lewis 2008, 62). And finally, the investigated stylistic means in the analysis of the figurative component of the concept “good” used most often to describe the inanimate objects in the novel “The Chronicles of Narnia” are the following: *soft green light; smooth water; tired-looking light; sunny quietness of the Wood; warm, green sunshine of the wood; it was a rich place: as rich as plum cake; silver apples peeped out like stars from under every leaf; sun laughed for joy; flowers began to think about closing; the silence of the wood had been rich and warm and full of life.* Less often used to describe the animate objects: *golden mane and the great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes; the fiery brightness of the Lion; hair like burning silver; face seemed to be a sea of tossing gold; they had never really been happy or wise or good, or even alive and awake, before; Aslan was bigger and more beautiful and more brightly golden and more terrible.*

The study revealed some specific character and a wide scale of perception of the concept “good” which is inherent to the native English speakers. The analysis presented the peculiarities of explication of the figurative component of the concept “good” by stylistic means on the material of C.S. Lewis “The Chronicles of Narnia” novel.

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Summary

The researchers treat the concept as a cognitive, psycholinguistic, linguistic culture, cultural, linguistic phenomenon. "Concept" is an umbrella term as it "covers" the subject areas of several scientific directions: first of all cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics. Language is necessary not for the formation of concepts but for the exchange of concepts and the discussion in the communication process. Concepts exist in the real mentality of people, therefore, it is necessary to verbalize them for communication i.e. express them using language means. In language concept can be verbalized by separate words, phrases, sentences or the whole texts, this depends on the concept itself. The choice of

verbal shape depends on the personal meaning, mental representation and the internal lexicon of the speaker, which are all interconnected among themselves. The notional component of the concept is stored in the mind in verbal form and can be just described or interpreted. Concept 'good' is one of the basic concepts in any culture. It takes an important place in the works of High Fantasy, namely, in the C.S. Lewis's novel "The Chronicles of Narnia". The interpretation of the concept "good" involves: light, bright, clear, green, white, merry, laugh. The most striking stylistic means used in the novel: epithet, comparison and similes, metaphor, personification, and intensification.

Santrauka

Mokslininkai koncepto sąvoką laiko kognityviniu, psicholingvistiniu, kalbos kultūros, kultūros ir kalbos reiškiniu. „Konceptas“ yra plati sąvoka, kuri apima kelias mokslo sritis: visų pirma kognityvinės psichologijos ir kognityvinės lingvistikos. Kalba yra būtina ne konceptų formavimui, bet konceptų keitimuisi ir jų aptarimui komunikacijos procese. Konceptai egzistuoja žmonių mentalitete, todėl būtina juos verbalizuoti komunikacijos procese, t.y. išreikšti naudojant kalbos priemones. Kalboje konceptas gali būti verbalizuotas atskirų žodžių, frazių, sakinių ar viso teksto pagalba, tai priklauso nuo paties koncepto. Verbalinės formos pasirinkimas priklauso nuo koncepto reikšmės, mentalinės reprezentacijos ir kalbančiojo leksikono, ir visos šios sąlygos yra tarpusavyje susijusios. Prasminis koncepto komponentas yra saugomas verbalinėje formoje sąmonėje ir gali būti apibūdintas ar interpretuojamas tik verbaliai. Konceptas „geras“ yra vienas pagrindinių konceptų bet kurioje kultūroje. Jis užima svarbią vietą High Fantasy kūryboje, būtent, C.S. Lewis romane „Narnijos Kronikos“. Koncepto „geras“ interpretacija reiškia: šviesa, šviesus, skaidrus, žalia, balta, linksmas, juoktis. Ryškiausias stilistinės priemonės panaudotos romane yra epitetai, palyginimai ir similės, metaforos, personifikacija, ir intensifikacija.